



MIAMI BEACH

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

NO. LTC # 199-2006

LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Mayor David Dermer and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jorge M. Gonzalez, City Manager

DATE: August 16, 2006

SUBJECT: *VOTE MIAMI BEACH* – Update/Proposed Early Voting initiative

The purpose of this LTC is to inform the Commission on the status of the Vote Miami Beach program, including additional initiatives that have been or are being proposed to coincide with this upcoming election season.

Background

Looking to increase our residents' participation in the electoral process, the VOTE MIAMI BEACH (VMB) Program was created by Commissioner Richard L. Steinberg and Mayor David Dermer in April 2004. The mission of the VMB Program is to create and stimulate awareness among Miami Beach residents about voting. Since its inception, the program has focused on ways to support its main goal: increasing voter registrations. In addition to frequent voter registration drives during citywide events and partnering with local school on voter education, a key component of VMB provides registered Miami Beach voters with a 10 percent discount at local restaurants and merchants throughout Miami Beach by simply presenting a valid voter's registration card indicating Miami Beach residency. More than 100 businesses have partnered with the City in this discount program, placing a sticker on their window to indicate their participation.

The program has been very successful in its efforts to register Miami Beach voters. The Miami-Dade County Department of Elections (Elections Department) reports that the City of Miami Beach now has a record 41,309 registered voters. While we continue to publicize the program via newspaper ads, our MB Magazine, MBTV-77 and other local media, low voter turnout during the last election has prompted a review of the program to determine if a new approach would be beneficial, including, for example, a focus on increasing voter turnout. In order to address this issue, new initiatives have been developed to focus on early voting as well as absentee voting, while complimenting our existing discount program.

New Initiatives

Once again the City of Miami Beach will have 2 early voting sites for a total of 14 days for the Primary Election and additional early voting days for the General Election. As an added incentive to generate interest in early voting, VMB participating business are being asked to consider providing an additional discount for anyone that votes early during the early voting period. About two-dozen businesses have agreed to provide the early voting incentive, which is an additional five percent discount (or total of 15% during the early voting period). The City's Parks and Recreation Department will also provide free admission to an open general session at the Scott Rakow Youth Center ice rink for any registered voter who takes advantage of the early voting. The additional discount will be good for the two weeks of early voting. The Elections Department has agreed to distribute the Early Voting discount card we will produce at the early voting sites.

In addition, in an effort to further promote early voting, including absentee voting, I have been asked to research the cost to mail each Miami Beach registered voter a mailer that would include information on early voting, as well as facilitate a request for an absentee ballot. This mailer will be designed in-house and will contain the personal information of each Miami Beach registered voter, requiring them to simply sign their name and mail back to the Elections Department in order to receive their absentee ballot. The mailer is designed as a 2-color, tri-fold, 8 ½ x 11 mailer that will include information on early voting (sites, times, dates, discount, etc.) as well as a pre-filled out and postage paid absentee ballot request.

The *estimated* costs associated with this mailing are as follows:

	42,000 pieces
Voter List (CD)	\$38.12
Printing (2-color)	\$2,868.00
Fulfillment	\$1,950.00
Postage to mail to registered voters (\$0.16 per piece bulk rate)	\$6,400.00
Return Reply Postage (for registered voters to mail absentee ballot request to Elections Department)*	\$1,611.09
USPS Permit Fee for return reply postage	\$160.00
USPS Processing Fee for return reply postage (based on over 1,000 expected pieces using the pre-paid postage)	\$500.00
Total (Estimated)	\$13,527.21

**The return reply postage cost assumes a 10% absentee ballot request return rate based on the absentee ballot requests by City of Miami Beach registered voters in the last two general elections. Each piece would cost \$0.39 to return.*

Due to deadlines associated with the elections process, this mailer must be printed and mailed out to registered voters by September in order for them to have enough time to mail in their absentee ballot requests, receive the absentee ballot and vote.

We have been able to absorb, to-date, the minimal costs that have historically been associated with the traditional VMB program. However, we wanted to provide you information on the scope and costs associated with this new VMB initiative, especially as it departs from the previous focus of the program.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me.

We expect to begin production and mailing of this "Get Out the Vote" effort no later than the end of August.

JMG/DM

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